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Wedding Band Worksheet

1. Describe the *stasis* in the play: where, when, who, what, etc. in a paragraph.

The play is set in the summer of 1918 in a coastal home in South Carolina. The play stars Julia, a seamstress who has been hopping around from neighborhood to neighborhood trying to find a place to truly call her home. Other prominent characters are her 10 year lover who is a baker named Herman, Fanny her landlord as well as a woman who represents the black race (or so she claims), and her two neighbors with children, Lula and Mattie. Lula has her son Nelson who is a soldier for the Army, and Mattie has Teeta along with a white child she takes care of, Princess. The two antagonists of the play are Herman's mother, Frieda, and his sister, Annabelle, who try to come between Herman and Julia. The main conflict of this play is the unlawfulness of Herman's and Julia's love for each other, as well as the prejudice against it from both the black people and white people. Although towards the end, Annabelle backs down from the confrontation and eventually so does her mother. In the end, Julia and Herman do get to be with each other, both in love and heading to New York for a new life.

2. What is the *intrusion*?

Herman catching influenza definitely was what broke the status quo, especially after his mother and sister barged into Julia's home to "look after" Herman. It was definitely Frieda lamenting and screaming at Julia over her love for Herman that caused dramatic action to start rolling. Julia and Herman want their own life together under the same roof with the same name, but Frieda condemns Julia and even Herman for loving a black woman. She stands in the way of their love at first, but on a deeper level, it is Herman's and Julia's differing skin colors that keeps them from getting what they want.

3. What is the *unique factor*?

Herman catching influenza is the unique factor.

4. What is the *dramatic question* that should be answered by the end of the play?

"Does the law matter more or does the feeling of two people in love and the effort they put in matter more?" & "Should skin color define law?"

5. Provide an illustration of the *two kinds of exposition* that the play has in it.

6. Identify the most *theatrical moment* in the play and of what importance it seems to be.

I think the most theatrical moment has to be when Herman is losing his mind over the influenza, reciting Calhoun's speech, while Julia and Frieda's screaming match is starting to escalate and they're calling each other horrible names, and Julia drops the bomb that it has been her that's been giving Frieda the nice curtains, the tailored clothes, and that Herman just brings it to her, and that it was also Julia who took care of Frieda when she came down with sickness.

7. List some of the *themes* of the play.

Law vs. Love

Love vs. Lust

Racism

Socio-economic status

Privilege vs. Poverty

8. What do the principal characters *want* and what are some *obstacles* that stand in the way of them getting what they want?

Julia wants to be with Herman but social and political prejudice stand in their way. Mattie wants to have legal papers for her marriage with October so she can also receive his army entitlements, but her previous marriage stands in her way since she never got a divorce and they're also illegal. Annabelle wants to be with her sailor, but her family stands in the way due to their own prejudice over his working status.

9. Describe some possible *images* in the play and how does the *title* help us understand the play.

Some images in the play that pop up often are objects reminiscent of a wedding (no surprise!) such as the wedding ring that Herman gifts Julia to wear around her neck and also a small wedding cake that have a groom and bride on top. Money is often waved around throughout the play, especially by Mattie, and is a delicate topic since money can define your socio-economic status which is a huge part of the play. Nelson's army jacket does pop up from time to time throughout the play whenever he's around, and I think it does even more to emphasize the role socio-economic status plays along with racial profiling, because Nelson may be a soldier fighting for American lives, but because he is black, he does not get the respect he deserves and has water thrown at him for it.

The title of this play definitely makes clear what the priority is for Julia. Her priority is whether or not she can still be with Herman considering not only political and social factor, but also her own feelings for Herman and the situation they've been stuck in for 10 years. In the end, they do stick together, and I think the title *Wedding Band* fits them because in marriage, you're going to be tied to your partner with that ring and what it represents, but you also have to work in a marriage by talking about your emotions and how you view the relationship and compromise with your partner which is what Julia and Herman talk about in the end when he gives her the ship tickets.

10. Briefly define the *family relationships* that are examined in the play.

Childress definitely did not portray the typical overprotective and nurturing type of families that a lot of media like to portray as the American family, which I think is much more realistic. Mattie is shown screaming at Teeta for losing a quarter and getting very upset with her, but also later petting her and caring for her as her mother and whatnot. The black families that we see are generally like that in this play, tough on each other but very loving, especially Lula and Nelson. Nelson views Lula as the woman who saved his life from the orphanage and gave him someone to care about, while Lula sees Nelson as not only a true son, but also a brave and respected man for fighting in the army. With the one white family we see, it's a shocking contrast because they don't really love each other at all. Frieda didn't even pretend to be concerned that her son was dying, and even said that if he dies, she won't care, because she no longer holds any feelings for him and neither does Herman for his own mother. Herman primarily sees her as someone he owes rather than cares for. He cares more about giving her back the money she's loaned him versus taking care of her and following what she wants for him. Annabelle sees her mother and brother as nothing but obstacles against her love for her sailor.